

PROJECT ESSAY

CHURCH EDUCATION: THE LEARNING CENTER APPROACH

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Submitted By

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Dedicated to my parents,
Mr. and Mrs. Jesse B. Snulligan
and to my sisters,
Phyllis and Danita
with love.

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INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The overall objective of Christian education is to assist individuals to learn about God through Jesus Christ and to grow in Christian nurture. It is apparent through the decreasing number of Sunday school participants and the restlessness and boredom that can be observed in a large number of presently existing Sunday school classes, that this objective is not being met. In an effort to remedy this serious problem, I propose that consideration be given to the implementation of the learning center approach in Christian education. The learning center method conduces meaningful learning in the public school situation and should be adopted to meet the needs of the church school situation.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study is to show the imperative need for the planning and the development of the learning center method in the church school.

Limitation of the Study

There are many areas of the problem stated above. Three such areas are stated below:

- (1) Leadership Training
- (2) Programming
- (3) Recycling of Centers

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However, in this particular study, I will deal only with pertinent and general information necessary to institute the learning center approach to Christian education. The suggested solutions discussed here will apply particularly to the Sunday school class setting. Although the learning center method can be utilized in adult education, the information in this study will not apply specifically to this age group.

Statement of Research Methodology

The basic information to be used in this study will be based on the experiences of teachers and pupils, particularly in the church school environment, in the teaching-learning situation. The pupils in this study will be limited to the junior high grade levels-fifth through ninth grades. All information and data utilized in this study will be based on two primary sources as described below:

- (1) Research studies of real learning situations where the actual use of the learning center method was implemented.
- (2) Personal experiences with planning and developing the learning center approach to Christian education in Trinity Methodist Church.

Definition of Principle Terms

Center---is a developed designated area that provides guidance for pupils in activities that will enable them to investigate suggested ideas and concepts.

Environment---refers to the planned atmosphere or climate that facilitates learning.

Learning---refers to the ability of an individual to grasp and understand concepts and ideas that will lead to internalization.

Learning Center Method---is a classroom pattern of organization that utilizes the teaching-learning relationship into a formate or style of teaching.

Teaching-Learning Relationship---is a process whereby students learn (understand and internalize concepts and ideas) with the use of a combination of major methods of teaching.

Chapter I

Defining Christian Education

The purpose of Christian education is to educate individuals and guide them in understanding Christian concepts and to guide them in making Christ relevant to their lives.

"Effective education involves the whole person, his response to the world outside him, and the internal changes and external expressions that emerge from sorting out and testing teaching/learning experiences and results in the persons increased capacity to participate in humanizing relations with other people, sharing in a sense of community, and act reflectively in the world where he lives".¹ This elaborated definition is the undergirding foundation of the learning center approach in the church education.

"Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost...teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you". (Matthew 28: 19-20.). The church has a mandate to provide educational guidance in the faith. The educational ministry is concerned with the Christian faith which comes to us out of the past, is based on the biblical revelations and is subject to the continuing activity of God through the Holy Spirit.² Christian teaching and nurture

is an attempt to bring persons into relationship with the gospel, but not with the gospel as a dead tradition out of the past, but rather with it as God's continued activity in the world today.

In Christian education, objectives have been formulated by each denomination to provide theological direction and guidance in their educational ministry. One denomination has set forth its general purpose of Christian education as follows:

"The objective of the church as manifested through its educational ministry is that all persons be aware of and grow in their understanding of God, especially of his redeeming love as revealed in Jesus Christ, and that they respond in faith and love--to the end that they may know who they are and what their human situation means, increasingly identify themselves as sons of God and members of the Christian community, live in the spirit of God in every relationship, fulfill their common discipleship in the world, and abide in the Christian hope".³

Another denomination describes its objectives in Christian curriculum and lesson materials by stressing the covenant relationship, with the hope that those who respond "will seek to live out in the world, both corporately as his people and individually as his servants, the meaning of the covenant ob-

ligation".⁴ The objective is "that all persons may respond in faith to the call of God in Jesus Christ and be nurtured in the life of fellowship with him, that they may face all of life's relationships and responsibilities as children of God."⁵

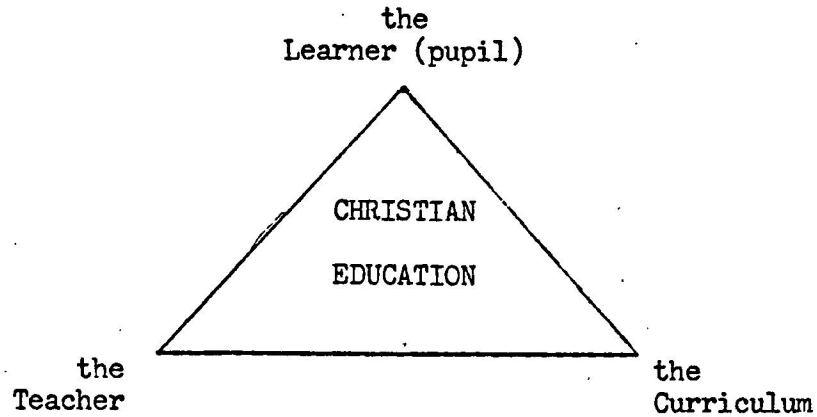
Regardless of which denominational objectives are referred to, all of them place emphasis on two elements--God's grace and man's faith and works, in hopes that man will grow and develop into a relationship of love and obedience in Christ. Christian education operates on the basis that man can encounter God through the following ways:⁶

1. Entering into relationships with other persons, individually and in groups, in which God's love, judgement, forgiveness, and leading become real to the learner.
2. Participating in the total life of the church, including worship and the sacraments and becoming identified with its present human membership as well as with those who have gone before.
3. Becoming aware of and appropriating the materials and symbols of the Christian faith.
4. Meeting life in terms of vocation--the sense of God's calling.

Robert G. Fulbright, who has had many years of experience as a Christian educator, describes the three basic ingredients of Christian education as the pupil, the teacher and the

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curriculum. He makes use of the following diagram in describing the relationship of these ingredients to each other.⁷



Although these three ingredients are necessary to make up the whole, each one plays its own distinctive role in the learning process. The student is the most important element of the triangle because all planning and teaching is focused on him. He must be understood by the teacher in terms of his worth as a child of God and his individual interests, abilities and needs. These determine the teaching approaches to be utilized in Christian education. According to Fulbright, "The learner must be the focus of the triangle in Christian education. When the teacher forgets his target, his work and planning are done in vain".⁸ The teacher is the second most important element. The teacher of students in the church school situation has the great responsibility of guiding the students in a way that will encourage them to make changes in their behavior and life style that will lead toward the desired goal

of Christian education. Much of how and what students learn about Christian concepts and ideas are the responsibility of the teacher, for the teacher will determine to a large degree the Christian education that children receive. Their knowledge of God and response to him will be determined to a great extent by the teachers teaching ability and life style. The teacher's own Christian experience is important to students. The curriculum is the third element. A church's curriculum may be thought of as the sum of all learning experiences resulting from a curriculum plan used under church guidance and directed toward attaining a church's objective.⁹ The curriculum is provided to make sure that there is a balance of learning experiences for the students. It is developed so that religious nurture and guidance are provided with the proper emphasize at each age level. It includes a variety of suggestions for plans and methods.

The traditional approach of teaching in church education (which I have labeled as the authoritarian approach to teaching) is out dated and is not meeting the objective of Christian education. This is obvious in the serious problem of the declining number of Sunday school participants. The traditional approach to teaching in the church school situation is based on the popular method of conveying facts. Some teachers may approach the task of teaching children in a manner simular to

the way he was taught twenty years ago--his concept of teaching may be to gather six or eight children around him who will sit still and listen while he teaches the lesson.¹⁰

The approaches to teaching and educating today are changing. Educators and specialist in the field of education, both secular and religious education, have found that education which fosters the kind of learning that involves the total person is the most effective. The method of relating facts to students is no longer sufficient because students aren't being motivated enough and aren't being provided with opportunities for creative growth (and in the church school situation, for either creative or spiritual growth). Even in public schools with their present use of innovative teaching-learning methods find that children are approaching the task of learning with a new anticipation in situations where the total person is involved. Learning should be exciting and challenging and the processes of thinking, analyzing, examining and questioning should become intergal parts of the children.¹¹ These processes should not be ignored in the church school. Rather, the students are supposed to comtemplate, create, examine, build, memorize, practise, experiement, investigate, discover, learn, and search.¹² In other words, when students are taught Christian principles, they should be involved in the learning process and provided with opportunities that allow them to think,

learn and express creatively.

The learning center is a relatively modern approach used in the field of Christian education to relate the biblical message to students. It involves that the teaching and learning processes take place in various kinds of activity centers through which the desired goals and objectives can be accomplished. Education is perhaps the most important means of communicating the Christian message. In order to educate effectively, the total persons must be involved in the learning process. And the learning center approach does exactly this--it involves the total person in an environment that allows him to learn, discover and grow.

The goals and objectives undergirding the learning center approach should be adopted from the general goals of Christian education used in the particular church. The students should always be the primary concern, but the goals should be of such a nature which allows both the students and the teacher to learn and enjoy their Christian education experience together.

The learning center approach operates on the assumption that learning is better facilitated when the students are involved in the learning process. In developing the learning center approach, some guidelines should be considered. Following are some general guidelines that have been very effective

when used in establishing learning centers.¹³

1. A variety of activities for learners must be provided.
2. Materials and activities in each center must cover the range from simple to difficult, and from concrete to abstract.
3. Abilities, interests, and needs of learners must be ruling factors.
4. Multimedia and manipulative materials, supporting the topic, the skill, or the concept around which a center is structured, should be included.
5. Children should be introduced to each learning center and should be fully aware of what it contains and how it is to be used.
6. There should be a classroom organizational plan to tell learners when and how to use centers.
7. Teachers and learners should cooperatively develop a set of rules to be followed in using each learning center, and they should be posted. When children are involved in establishment of rules for behavior in centers, they feel responsible for carrying them out. This is a first step toward independent learning.
8. Teachers should provide some means for recording-keeping and evaluating so that both children and teachers can account for time spent and learnings accomplishes.
9. Let children create their own learning centers when they can.

Remembering that the learning center approach to learning operates on the assumption that learning is better facilitated when the pupil is involved in the learning process, opportunities should be provided that call for the students to make use of all their sensory perceptions. Learning is

better promoted when the students are provided with a variety of opportunities that involve their total self. Here is an abbreviated list that indicates some learning projects and experiences that involve different senses. As a rule these are the more desirable learning experiences because these projects open the way to a higher degree of involvement and participation by students.¹⁴

<u>Hearing</u>	<u>Seeing</u>	<u>Touching</u>
Bible verse games	Bible verse games	Bible verse games
choral speaking	books	block-printing
dramalization	cartooning	clay modeling
field trips	charts	collage
films	clay modeling	dramatization
free association quizz	creative writing	field trips
interview	dramalization	marionetes
lecture forum	field trips	musical instruments
monologue	murals	murals
music	newspaper writing	pantomine
poems	pantomine	picture posing
role playing	photography	skill games
skill games	posters	stick puppets
symposium-forum	story-writing	string painting

Smelling-----field trips

Tasting-----field trips

Chapter II

Defining the Process of Teaching

Chrisitan education operates on the learning conditions and principles as those of public education. Communication is the basis of all teaching, both religious and secular. But the Christian teacher has an additional power which comes directly from Jesus Christ who said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach....and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28: 18-20).¹⁵ One writer has stated this as follows- "The distinctive element in Christian education is that it views man in relationship to God and is carried forward in the light of the gospel. Christian education is focused in the meeting between God and man in Christ".¹⁶ Realizing this as the foundations of Christian education, the learning center approach attempts to relate the Christian message in creative, innovative and meaningful learning experiences that will result in a deeper awareness of God's presence in life.

The role of the teacher who makes use of the learning center method is that of a learning experience creator--one who creates relevant learning situations that are important and meaningful to students.¹⁷ Good teaching includes planning

for and securing involvement of the student throughout the lesson. From personal observation, many unsuccessful church teachers who have been teaching for some time tend to fall into two (2) major groups. There are those teachers whose teaching is not based on a sense of commitment. Their lack of commitment usually expresses itself in a lack of preparation and lack of skills. The second category consist of those teachers who do take their job seriously and who are dedicated, but who fail to understand that learning must involve the student. Spiritual growth isn't something that you can teach a person-- it is a by-product of spiritual understanding, comprehension, and internalization.

There are several possible forms of the learning center approach, but there are four in particular that I have experimented with in the church class situation and shall precede to describe them briefly. The first one is the open classroom form. I am impartial to the open classroom form because I find that students respond more favorably to this particular form as compared to other forms of the learning center methods utilized. The main emphasize here is on accomplishing the general goals by having the students to select their own interests within the class context and then to procede to work at their own individual pace. The students are free to move from one center to another after the completion of work. The

interest centers are related to the themes and should contain experiences for discovery, learning and reflection.

Example (of the Open Classroom Form)

The lesson is on the Miracles of Jesus. In one center, there are a few students writing a newspaper that might have been published in Jesus' day, with the story of the miracles as headline. The newspaper will feature headlines and articles plus pictures drawn by the students of the different miracles performed by Jesus. In another section of the room a group of students are dramatizing one of the miracles. They are putting themselves in the roles of the characters and expressing how they think they felt. In yet another center, the students were singing familiar hymns related to Jesus' miracles (such as 'Lift Thy Head, O Zion, Weeping' and 'The Son of God Goes Forth to War') and then discussing hymn texts. (This causes music to have a deeper meaning to the students).

The second form is called the Thematic Activity Form. This form is built around a specific theme which consist of questions provided to stimulate the student to think about different aspects of life from a Christian perspective. The student chooses a center of his choice and continues to work in that center throughout the session or until he completes the project in that particular center.

Example (of one center of the The Thematic Activity Form)

This activity is called "Bible Tick-tack-toe". Four strips of masking tape are prepared on the floor to make the framework for the game. On one stack of paper sheets, mark 'O' on the front. On the other stack mark 'X'. On the back of each 'X' and 'O', write a question based on the unit of study just completed. Divide the students into two groups, and assign 'X's' to one group and 'O's' to the other group. As each child takes one of the questions, he reads it aloud and if he can answer it correctly, he plays his 'X' or 'O'. If he doesn't know the answer he forfeits his turn. The question that can't be answered by the child is then dealt with in the large group and discussed. The team getting three 'X's' or three 'O's' in a straight line wins the game.¹⁸

The Community Building form is third. Its main emphasize is on interpersonal relationships as they apply to the Christian experience. Of special concern is the individuals needs and community concerns. The content of the various centers employed is dependent on the needs of the particular class to Christian relationships through a sense of belonging and a sense of involvement. The student should also be aided in developing value judgements from a Christian perspective.

Example (of one center of the Community Building Form)

The theme is the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15: 11-32).

The students draw a series of pictures on one long sheet of paper to create a mural depicting the parable in five (5) parts.

First Part: The father and his two sons are living together on the father's farm.

Second Part: The younger son having just received his inheritance, is starting to leave home.

Third Part: The younger son, now away from home, is running out of money and begins looking for work and food.

Fourth Part: The younger son finds work--that of feeding pigs. He gets his food from the food given to the pigs.

Fifth Part: The younger son realizes he would be better off as a servant for his father. He knows that he has sinned and has done wrong. He decides to return home, ask for forgiveness and work as a servant for his father.¹⁹

Lastly, is the Self-Instruction form. The Self-Instruction form of the learning center method is usually employed in church classes that have a generous financial budget. This is because this particular form calls for the use of a variety of equipment and media such as tapes and tape recorders, films and filmstrips, projectors, phonographs, multi-jack earphones, etc. These are to be utilized by the students either in small groups or individually in pursuing her/his learning objectives.

Example (of one center of the Self-Instruction Form)

The theme of the lesson is "The Cross of Jesus Christ". A bulletin board displays two mounted pictures and a large yellow poster board cross. There is a table with five chairs, Bibles, and a listening center with earphones. A cassette tape on recorder plays a recording of the song "Hallelajah Chorus", the Lord's Prayer, and "Onward Christian Soldiers". Another table is filled with assorted decorating materials. The students are instructed to listen to the cassette while reading Acts 2:1-36. Using the available materials, they are to creatively turn the plain cross on the bulletin board into a triumphant cross.²⁰

Chapter III

Areas In Which The Learning
Center Approach Gives Constructive Help

The learning center approach to Christian education, like any other approach to learning, is not an all perfect method. But it does offer solutions in meeting and combating some problems that arise in the church's educational program. Some of these problems and how the learning center method helps eliminates them are discussed in a chart presented by L.E.A.D. (an agency for religious Leadership, Education, And Development) at a workshop held at the Interdenominational Theological Center, Atlanta, Georgia in July, 1975.

The following few pages contain charts of several kinds of problems and difficulties that Christian education is faced with and how the learning center approach can offer help in dealing with these problems which can be divided into three major headings (as they were presented at the L.E.A.D. workshop described above).²¹

Problems stemming from today's cultural realities

Problems related to specific local conditions

Problems related to people's expectations

Today's Cultural Realities	(L.C.=Learning Center) Problems They Pose for Christian Education	How Use of Learning Center Forms Can Help Meet These Problems
1. Greater mobility of people 2. Longer weekends- more leisure time 3. More family and other group activities	Irregular attendance, both for leader and students. Cannot count of the same people being present on consecutive Sundays.	Irregular attendance can be better taken into account in the L.C.'s shorter-term, more contained experiences based on student's choice of interest activity centers. Because students enjoy the sessions, attendance is better.
4. Massmedia/T.V. causes viewer to see life in many faceted wholes to which he responds with total response of feeling and mental capacities	Church ed. has stressed a cognitive, linear style of learning that is often unstimulating to persons accustomed to mass media impact.	L.C.'s encourage students to use a variety of media to express their own feelings and ideas. They aren't locked into one learning procedure.
5. There exist a desire for variety in pace and availability of options in the educational process. 6. Increasing adult tendency to regard church as non-essential 7. Rising interest among young in forms of religion-but not necessarily institutional form	Students and some teachers, see no relevance to their daily concerns of what goes on in church and/or church school. They are bored. They may find participation in only one class group confining.	L.C. forms offer students and teachers a shared learning experience; greater flexibility in choice of learning activities; opportunities to relate on their own terms to a wider range of ages and interest; a chance to encounter and deal with new ideas and feelings.
8. Persons want to help determine their educational goals.	Students are dissatisfied with pre-determined structures and procedures.	Teachers and students share responsibility in learning activities and planning.

Elements in Local Situations to be Taken into Account (Typical Examples)	Problems They Pose for Christian Education	How use of Learning Center Forms Can Help Meet These Problems
1. "We've been using our regular curriculum too long." 2. "When some of the children are absent, the class isn't big enough to interest anyone".	Essentially, this is a problem of examining the local situation carefully. Is change in grouping/grading needed?	A broadly graded L.C. set-up takes care of both attendance and enrollees for any one age group. In the L.C. approach themes and the content of centers can be taken from regular curriculum.
3. "We're planning a new building." 4. "Our building is so old that it's positively anti-educational".	Whether erecting a new building or trying to use as is, the church needs to design and use the facilities in ways that will help to achieve its goals.	The L.C. offers guidelines for what to do about physical facilities. A large open room is invaluable for any L.C. form.
5. "We're making a study of all organizations in the church and what they do."	The church should be aware of the educational impact and possibilities of all parts of its life.	The L.C. approach should be studied together with other valid approaches to planned education in the church. The relationship between content-centered and experience/reflection/ expression-centered teaching should be carefully studied.
6. "Because our public schools have a lot of innovative teaching, our church school must be dull."	Children accustomed to innovative public school approaches may find routine-type church school not only dull but simplistic.	Look at the innovative approaches of the L.C. used in public schools, particularly, the self-instruction type and the use of student choice and pursuit of his own learning goals. Children can learn through these approaches in church, too.

People and Their Expectations	Problems They Pose for Church Education	How use of Learning Center Forms Can Help Meet These Problems
<p>1. There seems to be a variety of expectations by parents about Christian education and what it ought to be. But their expectations aren't usually what church school is all about now.</p> <p>2. Influenced by family attitudes, children may expect to be bored.</p>	<p>The negativism of low expectations may produce conflict between teacher and students. The basic problem is one of no clear perception or understanding of what the purpose and goals of Christian education are.</p>	<p>An examination of the L.C. approach can help provide a chance for clarification of what Christian education is. Looking at the L.C. approach by way of objective comparison with the present approach can give church and parents a chance to reconsider expectations, particularly when they differ from each other.</p>
<p>3. Recruiting and training teachers. More frequently teachers appear to be: (a) unwilling to commit themselves to year-long teaching assignments (b) reluctant to be assigned to one group of children for a long period of time (c) indifferent or unwilling to commit themselves to training programs</p>	<p>The problem is how to find teachers? This is both a problem of people being part of their culture--and so quite naturally involved in its realities--and of prospective teachers being unsure of what is really expected of them. Related to these problems is what the church thinks of, and expects of, education.</p>	<p>Use of the L.C. approach can offer some specific helps in meeting specific parts of these problems. Such as (a) the terms of the contract of the L.C. approach are definite (b) the L.C. approach uses a great variety of skills (c) teachers are not tied to one specified group of children for a long period of time. (d) the role of the teacher is that of enabler, not that of final authority on all matters.</p>

Chapter IV

The Planning and Developing
of the Learning Center Approach

The planning and developing of the learning center approach involves long range insight. The ages of the students, the types of interest and activity centers to be implemented and the number of teachers needed are just a few of the important factors to be considered. The following discussion is concerned with seven additional factors that should be seriously considered while planning to make use of the learning center method in the church school.

The planning group.--The planning group is a vital group in the implementation of the learning form. This group is responsible for formulating the objectives to be achieved in order to reach the desired outcome. The planning committee then precedes to select the types (or combining types) of learning center to meet the particular needs of the class (or church). This committee is also responsible for the grouping and grading, securing resources of all kinds to be used by the students, development and securing of space and facilities to create a learning environment, and the enlistment of teachers for the class.

The time schedule.--The time element of the learning sessions

varies with individual churches. Most Sunday school classes last about one hour and are held before the worship period. Other churches vary--some classes are held directly after the worship period and some aren't held on Sundays at all, but operate during the week or on Saturdays. The time schedule is another factor that must be adopted to fit the needs of the church.

The leadership.--Successful teachers are creative teachers and creativity is a desired characteristic of teachers who use the learning center approach. The effects of creativity can be seen in both the lesson preparation and presentation. It (creativity) should be the living experience of the teacher whose life has been touched by Christ and is directed by the Spirit of God.²² Other desirable characteristics that a teacher in Christian education should possess are dedication, intellectual and spiritual knowledge, maturity, open-mindedness and sensitivity.

The resources and curriculum.--Curriculum and resource materials should be used to enhance and supplement the lesson content and/or method. These materials should assist the teacher in making possible for students the kinds of learning experiences that are consistent with the churches' objectives for Christian education. Many churches already possess and make use of curriculum themes and materials published by their denominational

houses, but other helpful resources include audio-visuals (films, filmstrips, graphics, television, etc.), globes, magazines and newspapers, art supplies (clay, water paints, oil paints, etc.), puzzles, human resources and numerous others.

The learning environment.--The learning environment should be conducive to effective learning. Because students should feel 'at home' in the church class and comfortable, an informal class structure is most desirable. Pictures, posters and mobiles help to create a warm atmosphere. Most important of all is that the classroom suggest the presence of God. One teacher suggest that this message can be conveyed by displaying a bulletin board with pictures of each child and a list of God's gifts to that child (supplied by the student, of course).²³

Grouping and Grading.--The grouping and grading of students is another factor that should be designed to meet the particular needs of the individual church. The size of the groups should be carefully determined by (a) according to the objectives of the local situation, (b) in light of the type of learning center form being utilized and the type of activities, and (c) according to the number of students.²⁴ Since most programs for kindergarten and nursery aged children operate on basic learning center principles, this is usually a separate group. Children of elementary school age are usually grouped together; Junior High students form another group, and the Youth are still in

yet another group.

Evaluation.--The evaluation is important because it lets the teacher take stock of how well the program is going and how the students are responding to it. Areas for evaluation include the goals and objectives, the actual plan, the administration, etc. From this type of information, the teacher can discover how to proceed in the future and be able to formulate answers to such questions such as: Where do we go from here? Are there indications of emerging needs and learning goals? Was this goal accomplished well enough to leave or do we need to incorporate part in future events? How do we build on the strengths we have discovered?²⁵

A Resume of How I Made
Plan For Use of the Learning Center Approach

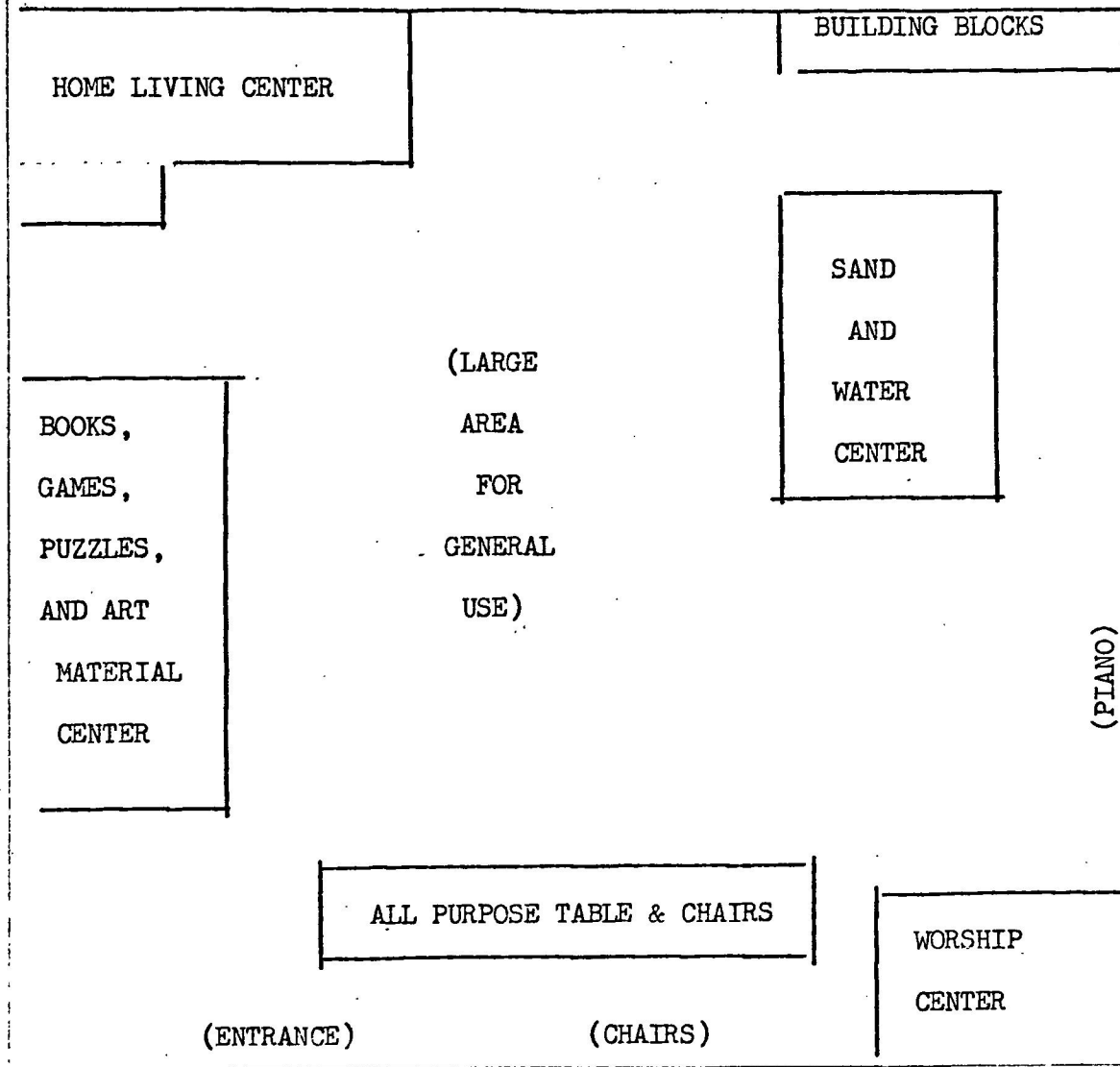
The following resume is based on my experiences as Sunday School teacher at Trinity United Methodist Church, Atlanta, Georgia, 1975.

Situation: I became teacher to a Sunday School class that hired teachers on a six month contract basis and that had no particular methods or guidelines by which to operate. There were approximately twelve (12) students in my class, ages ranging from 4 to 6 years old. The class met from 9:30 a.m. until 12:15.

Methodology: After getting acquainted with my students, becoming familiar with the resources and equipment at my disposal and the physical areas available to me, I began preparation for implementing the learning center approach (open-class form) in my classroom. In setting up my aims, goals, and objectives, I referred to the objectives and purpose of the United Methodist Curriculum and Uniform Lesson Series. I sought and received

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approval from the Director of Children's
Ministeries. With the students help, we re-
arranged the classroom to contain four
activity centers plus one large area for
general usage. Our class room was arranged
as shown in the following diagram.



After experimenting with other schedules, I adopted the one described below to fit the needs of my students.

A Typical Sunday Schedule (with themes varying each Sunday)

- 9:30 Morning Greetings, Singing and Bible Lesson
- 10:15 Activity Centers
 - Home Living Center
 - Arts and Crafts Center
 - Water and Sand Center
 - Games and Book Center
- 11:00 Clean Up
- 11:15 Snack and Short Rest Period
- 11:45 Sharing Experience
- 12:15 Leave for Home

A Sample Form for Weekly Planning--I did my weekly planning on a sheet such as this one prepared during the week for each Sunday.

Date _____			
Concepts, themes, goals, and objectives _____			

Centers	Specific Activities	Materials Needed	Teachers Responsibilities

Evaluation (in the form of a check sheet)

NAME	LEARNING CENTERS			COMMENTS

Example of a Sunday School Class Day

I would arrive at Sunday School about 9:15 to get the necessary materials (paper, paintings, aprons, and whatever else was needed for that day) out and set up the worship center. (This consisted of getting out the children's Bible, the offering plate, a table cloth and regular poster-pictures depicting scenes of how the church money is spent). As the children began to arrive about 9:30, I would greet each individually. When most of the class had arrived we would begin singing hymns and songs that the children were familiar with. Then I would introduce them to a new song or poem. By this time, when most of the children who were coming were present, I would tell the children a Bible story. (Because so few of the stories that come directly from the Bible are understood by children of this age range, most of the stories I told were either paraphrased Bible stories or stories about characters from the Bible).

Next is a short worship period in which the children go to the worship table and give their offering and we say a prayer to god together, sometimes I lead, sometimes the children want to lead. This is followed by activity time. Supposing that the theme is about "God's Creation" then the activities are centered around this theme.

Water and Sand Center. The children are making one huge nature scene with sand and water. They make mountains, hills, valleys, animals, trees, etc. in the sand box.

Home Living Center. The children are planting flower and plant seeds in baby food jars, decorating the jars and watering the plants.

Arts and Craft Center. Children are making mobils with the seven different pictures representing God's seven day Creation of the universe which were included in the Lesson Package.

Games and Book Center. The students are looking through old magazines and books and cutting out pictures of the things included in God's Creation as they heard them mentioned in the Bible story told earlier. When they have gathered enough pictures, they will paste them in a scrape-book.

After the children complete work in one center they are free to move to another until Activity Time is over. At 11:00 o'clock, we sing the song "It's Time To Put Our Toys Away" and

we begin cleaning up. From 11:15 until 11:45 we have snacks (usually cookies and Kool-aid) followed by fifteen minutes of rest with our heads on the table and silence. The next thirty minutes are spent just sitting on the floor talking, laughing, singing along with the record player, taking a nature walk or what ever the children want to do. I find that this time that we spend together is very meaningful to the children because it gives them a chance to talk about things that they have experienced during the week (such as school problems, the death of a grandmother, the birth of a new baby in the family etc.). This is also a good time to take attendance. At 12:15 we end our class by holding hands and singing a good-bye song. Immediately after the children leave, I do my evaluation while the days activities are still fresh in my mind.

NOTES

1. France W. Eastman et al., The Learning Center Approach in Christian Education (Philadelphia: Division of Christian Education, United Church Board for Homeland Ministeries, 1973), p. 1.

2. Marvin J. Taylor, An Introduction to Christian Education (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), p. 12.

3. A Statement of the Program Committee of the General Board of Education, The United Methodist Church, Foundations of Christian Teaching in United Methodist Churches (Nashville: Graded Press, 1969), p. 31.

4. Education for Covenant Living (Richmond: Presbyterian Church in the United States, 1972), p. 25.

5. Ibid., p. 25.

6. Foundations of Christian Teaching in United Methodist Churches, p. 42.

7. Robert G. Fulbright, New Dimensions in Teaching Children (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1971), p. 17.

8. Ibid., p. 18.

9. Howard P. Colson and Raymond M. Rigdon, Understanding Your Church's Curriculum (Nashville: Broadmon Press, 1969), p. 38.

10. Fulbright, New Dimensions in Teaching, p. 13.

11. Ibid., p. 11.

12. Ibid., p. 11.

13. Richard E. Ishler, Margaret Ishler and Phyllis Lamb, First Steps To Open Classrooms In the Church (Durham: National Teacher Education Project, 1974), p. 10.

14. Fulbright, New Dimensions in Teaching, p. 117.

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15. Kenneth O. Gangel, Understanding Teaching (Wheaton: Evangelical Teacher Training Association, 1968), p. 11.

16. Foundations of Christian Teaching in United Methodist Churches, p. 41.

17. Clair M. Nicholson and Robert A. Kellman, "When Primary Children Do Their Own Thing" (M.A. Thesis, Atlanta University, 1970), p. 40.

18. Fulbright, New Dimensions in Teaching, p. 46.

19. Ibid., p. 94.

20. Ishler, Ishler and Lamb, First Steps to Open Classrooms, p. 15.

21. Eastman, The Learning Center Approach, pgs. 13-15.

22. Gangel, Understanding Teaching, p. 72.

23. Ralph C. Voight, Invitation to Learning-2 (Washington, D.C.: Acropolis Books LTD, 1974), p. 61.

24. Eastman, The Learning Center Approach, p. 11.

25. Al Hanner ed., "An Overview of Planning Educational Events" (Atlanta: Council on Ministeries, 1974), p. 4.
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